FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The study of a foreign language often opens up a whole new way of
seeing, understanding, and describing the world. Today’s students
should not be limited by a single language, but should be able to think
and communicate in a language other than their native tongue. The
Core requires that all candidates for the bachelor’s degree demonstrate
competence in a second language at or beyond the intermediate level.
In order to achieve this level of fluency and encourage more advanced
language study, students are expected to reach intermediate-level
proficiency by the time they have reached senior standing. Intermediate-
level proficiency in a foreign language is assessed in one of the following
ways:

• An appropriate score on the SAT II subject test or Advanced
Placement test, taken before matriculation to GS, as determined by
relevant departments for specific languages
• Demonstrating intermediate-level competence on the language
placement test administered by relevant departments or programs.
Language placement tests must be taken within the first two
semesters of study at GS, or, in cases where a student undertakes
language study as part of a Columbia-approved study abroad
program, at the beginning of the next term of enrollment after
returning from study abroad.
• Approved transfer credits in foreign language study showing
intermediate-level proficiency (usually two years of study)
• Approved transfer credit in foreign language showing intermediate-
level proficiency (must also have a score of 6 or 7 at the Higher Level
of the International Baccalaureate exam or a grade of C or better for
the A-level results)
• The satisfactory completion of the intermediate level of a language
sequence at Columbia, as determined by the relevant department (the
fourth term of a language, usually denoted as course number “1202”)
• Completing secondary education in another country in a language
other than English

Native speakers of languages other than English must take a language
placement test within two semesters of matriculating at GS to
demonstrate their language proficiency. If a placement test in a particular
language is not available at Columbia, students should speak with
their respective GS advisors about alternative testing arrangements.
Students diagnosed with a language learning disability must register with
the Office of Disability Services (http://health.columbia.edu/disability-
services/) in order to be considered for an accommodation for the foreign
language requirement.

Students should speak with their GS advisors soon after matriculating
at GS to discuss how they will satisfy this requirement. Because the
language requirement may take four semesters to fulfill, students who
have not satisfied the requirement by placement test, AP score, or
transfer credit are required to begin their language study no later than
their second year at GS, and to continue enrollment in language courses
each semester until the requirement has been met.

Students interested in study abroad may also begin or complete their
core foreign language study in numerous summer study abroad foreign
language immersion programs.